DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 472 089 EC 309 373

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|---|---|
| AUTHOR | Muller, Eve |
| TITLE | Statewide Behavior Initiatives--Literature Review and Survey Results. Synthesis Brief. |
| INSTITUTION | National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Alexandria, VA. |
| SPONS AGENCY | Special Education Programs (ED/OSERS), Washington, DC. |
| PUB DATE | 2002-10-00 |
| NOTE | 10p.; Produced by Project FORUM at NASDE. Based on work done by the Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions. |
| CONTRACT | H326F000001 |
| AVAILABLE FROM | National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), 1800 Diagonal Rd, Ste. 320, Alexandria, VA 22314. Tel: 703-519-3800; Web site: http://www.nasdse.org/forum.htm. For full text: http://www.nasdse.org/forum.htm. |
| PUB TYPE | Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Research (143) |
| EDRS PRICE | EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage. |
| DESCRIPTORS | Agency Cooperation; Antisocial Behavior; *Behavior Disorders; *Behavior Modification; Behavior Problems; Discipline Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Emotional Disturbances; Interdisciplinary Approach; Policy Formation; *Positive Reinforcement; *Prevention; Program Development; Program Implementation; State Departments of Education; *State Programs |

ABSTRACT

This report summarizes major points from the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports' (PBIS Center) literature review on statewide behavior initiatives (SBIs) and findings from the PBIS Center's study that examined the extent to which SBIs have been developed and implemented. Of the 19 states that responded to the PBIS Center's study, 16 have SBIs that address all students, not just students with disabilities. Almost all SBIs place special emphasis on interventions for students with severe emotional disturbance, students at-risk for social or academic failure, and chronic offenders irrespective of disability status. One-third of respondents reported that SBIs have been implemented on a statewide basis. The majority of SBI behavioral objectives focus on classroom disruption and antisocial behavior, school violence, bullying, delinquency, and harassment. Strategies for addressing these objectives include behavioral management, classroom management, social skills training, academic accommodations, and early screening and intervention. Recommendations for state policy are provided and include ensuring participants from all stakeholders in the development and implementation of SBIs; providing financial support for SBIs by tapping a variety of funding sources; and providing professional development to school and agency personnel on interdisciplinary teaming. (Contains 24 references.) (CR)

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# Statewide Behavior Initiatives-Literature Review and Survey Results. Synthesis Brief

By
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October 2002

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# Synthesis Brief

## *Statewide Behavior Initiatives – Literature Review and Survey Results*

***Based on work done by the Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions***

Synthesized by Eve Müller | Project FORUM at NASDSE | October 2002



### Introduction

Classroom behavior is a concern of teachers and administrators across the country. Due to increased attention to behavioral problems, states are taking more of an active role in addressing behavior through the development of statewide behavior initiatives (SBIs). An SBI is defined as any formal policy or plan describing the specific components and strategies of a long-term effort (3-5 years) intended to build the capacity of a state or non-state jurisdiction to provide behavioral support to schools. In order to better understand these state initiatives, Project FORUM at NASDSE conducted a survey in 2000 as part of its Cooperative Agreement with the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). Of the 43 state education agencies (SEAs) that responded to the FORUM survey, 26 reported having a statewide initiative in place. In 2002, the Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS Center) at the University of Oregon conducted a more in-depth, follow-up study examining the extent to which SBIs have been developed and implemented, and also compiled a related literature review. The PBIS Center obtained additional survey data from 18 out of 26 states with SBIs currently in place, and one state in the developmental phase for a total of 19 respondents.

This document provides a brief summary of the major points from the PBIS Center's publication and the Center's survey findings. It concludes with policy implications based on both. The PBIS Center's full report, entitled *Statewide Behavioral Initiatives: Status and Recommendations* (Boerman, Sugai, & Vincent, 2002), will soon be available at www.pbis.org.

### Major Points from the Source Document

The following section summarizes major points from the PBIS Center's literature review.

Historical Context and Need

SBIs have emerged as a policy-driven strategy intended to expand schools' roles in the delivery of student support services traditionally perceived to be located within the domain of social services. They also address a host of psychosocial needs that undermine students' abilities to learn and schools' capacities to teach. Interest in developing SBIs originated from three independent trends within education and social science reform. First, the magnitude of students' emotional and behavioral challenges has made it clear that schools can no longer ignore the personal and interpersonal domains of students' lives. Second, the development of SBIs is supported by a growing literature demonstrating the effectiveness of school-wide systems of positive behavioral supports (PBS). PBS is a collaborative, data-driven effort to develop school-wide and individualized responses to problem behaviors. Support plans are pro-active and address behavior problems for students with and without disabilities. Third, there is increasing awareness that traditional social service delivery models are no longer able to meet the needs of youth and families. [Related references: Carr et al., 2002; Epstein, Kutash, &

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Duchnowski, 1998; Phillips, Nelson & McLaughlin, 1993; Sugai & Horner, 1999; Sugai et al., 2000.][1]

*Education Operating in Isolation*

Schools can no longer work in isolation from the community as a whole. Because schools lack the capacity to address the complex educational and socio-emotional needs of students with severe behavioral challenges, schools are recognizing the need to redefine their roles in the lives of students and families. This represents a significant departure from past practices, when schools limited themselves to academic interventions only. [Related references: Adelman & Taylor, 1997; Walker et al., 1998.]

*A Shift in Approach to Problem Behavior*

Traditionally, the underlying belief among educators has been that young people should arrive at school prepared to learn and to behave appropriately. As a result, many educators have responded to problem behaviors in reactive ways rather than emphasizing the teaching and reinforcing of pro-social behavior. PBS represents an empirically validated alternative that is a cornerstone in the development of SBIs. [Related references: Mayer, 1995; Sulzer-Azaroff & Mayer, 1994.]

*A Shift in Agency Culture*

Participation in the development and implementation of SBIs often represents a significant move towards collaboration between agencies. In the past, human service agencies have failed to provide holistic support for children and families, and have instead delivered piecemeal services based on each agency's particular focus. Statewide policies have the potential to streamline administrative efforts, coordinate the allocation of resources, prevent overlap among services offered and lower costs of existing services. [Related references: Garvin & Young, 1994; Holtzman, 1992; Mitchell & Scott, 1994.]

Concerns and Challenges

Evidence suggests that an important component of improving access to student support services is a policy-driven integration of school and community resources. To a great degree, SBIs offer the potential to fulfill these calls for an integrated approach. However, numerous barriers to integration of services remain as a result of the existing institutional culture of social service agencies and schools. Delivering the promises of SBIs is contingent upon our ability to (a) redefine current relationships among governmental bodies, schools and community-based agencies and (b) create new systems of care based on a holistic and ecologically valid approach to meeting the needs of students and families. Major concerns and challenges include the following:

*Need for Community Supports*

Although the need for school-based community support services is widely recognized, these types of supports remain the exception rather than the rule. Evidence suggests that necessary supports will only emerge in response to the policy-driven integration of school and community resources intended to address a range of student needs. Most current educational reform emphasizes changes in curricula and school management, but fails to provide a mechanism for addressing students' psychosocial needs – needs which can only be met via school-based community supports. SBIs provide a model of service delivery that is uniquely suited to

[1] Bracketed references at the end of each section provide sources of additional information on the topic discussed.

address these needs. [Related references: Adelman & Taylor, 2000; Adelman, Taylor, & Schneider, 1999.]

*Bridging the Gap Between Institutional Cultures*

Although numerous steps have been taken to establish more effective linkages between schools and community agencies, a number of factors inhibit these attempts: (a) conflicting sets of institutional expectations and demands; (b) pressures from different disciplinary networks (e.g., training and certification boards, regulatory agencies, special interest groups, funding sources, professional organizations and unions); and (c) differing levels of commitment to interagency collaboration. Effective implementation of SBIs requires a change in the institutional culture within organizations and a concurrent shift in the nature of relationships among organizations. Another major roadblock to establishing effective linkages are policies and funding that support fragmentation of services and categorical programs. [Related references: Adler, 1994; Knapp, Barnard, Brandon, Gehrke, Smith, & Teather, 1994.]

*Developing New Systems of Governance*

Simply establishing school/agency linkages and bringing community programs into the schools, however, without addressing issues of governance may actually create new problems. Without structures of governance to resolve inter-organizational conflicts and address issues that arise from incompatible policies and statutory guidelines, interest group politics may eclipse larger policy concerns and undermine the capacity to implement SBIs. In order to effectively implement SBIs, there must be necessary changes in structures of school-agency governance. In the short term, however, administrators and service delivery staff from participating organizations can support SBIs by approaching interagency cooperation in a more flexible and creative manner. [Related references: Adelman & Taylor, 1999; Koppich, 1994.]

*Establishing Leadership: Determining Roles*

In many ways, schools are less suited than community agencies to assume a leadership position because schools have less experience in delivering psychosocial supports, providing comprehensive services and developing funding sources. SBIs are school-driven, however, and educational administrators cannot be expected to transfer responsibility to representatives of outside agencies who do not understand school priorities and operating procedures. Schools, then, must take the lead in implementing SBIs, while inviting significant input and guidance from community agencies. [Related reference: Dryfoos, 1994.]

*Interest Group Opposition: Managing Controversy*

Opposition to school-based services has come from human service and medical personnel concerned with preserving their professional "turf," budgetary issues and varying interpretations of the quality of care. Additional resistance has come from parents, religious organizations and community groups. In order to combat opposition, educational administrators and school boards need to equip themselves with clear rationales, evidence of improved academic and social outcomes, and proof that SBIs can be delivered both efficiently and effectively. [Related reference: Dryfoos, 1994.]

*Professional Development: The Role of the University*

Professionals in education and social services often lack training in the principles and practices of interdisciplinary collaboration. Furthermore, licensing and certification requirements fail to reflect the competencies associated with interdisciplinary

collaboration. Providing students with the skills necessary to participate effectively in interdisciplinary efforts necessitates changes in curriculum as well as the restructuring of practicum experiences and certification requirements. Accomplishing this task means that university departments must operate more collaboratively (i.e., work together to develop cross-disciplinary curricula) [Related references: Dryfoos, 1994; Knapp et al., 1994.]

*Developing Systems of Referral and Case Management*

An integrated referral and case management system offers the most comprehensive approach to developing, implementing and monitoring SBIs. Effective case management systems include a designated case manager, interdisciplinary case management team and members of the community service network. Integrated case management addresses several interrelated functions: (a) providing holistic assessment of student and family needs; (b) developing multi-component intervention plans; (c) brokering services to students and families; (d) coordinating services across school, home and community-based agencies; (e) providing advocacy and support in dealing with schools and agencies; (f) monitoring, evaluating, and modifying service plans; and (g) providing access to a case manager. [Related references: Smith, 1995; Smith & Stowitschek, 1998; Stowitschek, Smith & Armijo, 1998.]

## Findings from the State Survey

Scope of Services

Of the 19 states that responded to the PBIS Center's follow-up survey, 16 have SBIs that address all students, not just students with disabilities. Almost all SBIs place special emphasis on interventions for students with severe emotional disturbance, students at-risk for social or academic failure and chronic offenders irrespective of disability status. One third of respondents reported that SBIs have been implemented on a statewide basis. The remaining two thirds responded that the state has embraced the principles of SBIs and is currently testing behavioral initiatives in selected regions, districts or particular schools. Generally speaking, development and implementation of SBIs has been left to the discretion of school administrators, as only three respondents reported that participation has been mandated at either the state or district level.

Development of SBIs

Planning for and development of SBIs usually involves representatives from a wide range of stakeholder groups, most commonly the state department of education, special educators, general educators, outside consultants and building principals. Fewer than 10 states reported that they also included school psychologists and/or counselors, behavior specialists, college or university staff, district superintendents, agency representatives, parents, mental health practitioners, juvenile justice personnel and law enforcement officials. Input into the development of SBIs was generated mainly via a combination of focus groups, large committees, individual decision making and other processes. Timelines for development of SBIs range from less than six months to more than 18 months.

Fiscal and Human Resources

Allocation of human resources for implementation of SBIs varies significantly from state to state. For instance, the full-time equivalent (FTE) of personnel assigned to work directly with behavioral initiatives ranges from eight or nine FTEs to less than one FTE. Half of the survey respondents reported that non-state level personnel (e.g., district level or individual building staff)

were also dedicated to the implementation of SBIs. Sources of fiscal support included federal special education funds, district and local funds, state special funds, Safe and Drug Free Schools monies, state general funds, private funds/grants and other sources.

Behavioral Objectives and Interventions

The majority of SBI behavioral objectives focus on classroom disruption and antisocial behavior, school violence, bullying, delinquency and harassment. Strategies for addressing these objectives include behavior management, classroom management, social skills training, academic accommodations, and early screening and intervention. To support these interventions, the majority of respondents reported using functional behavioral assessments, behavior support planning, and team-based problem solving. Strategies used by fewer than 10 respondents include crisis management and comprehensive services (e.g., wrap-around) as elements of service planning and delivery. Just over half of the respondents (11 states) emphasized the importance of interagency collaboration, including participation from social service and community organizations, mental health agencies, juvenile justice and law enforcement.

Training

The majority of respondents reported designating a training coordinator to support their SBI, in addition to providing training of trainers across the state. Personnel involved in the delivery of training include state department of education officials, regional or district trainers, university staff and private consultants. The majority of respondents target the following groups for training: special educators; general educators and administrative personnel; school psychologists; school counselors; paraprofessionals; and mental health and other community agencies. Fewer than 10 respondents also reported training parents, representatives from juvenile justice and law enforcement and students.

Evaluation

A total of 12 respondents reported having procedures in place to evaluate their SBIs and of these, six reported that future funding and support for SBIs was linked to outcomes. Of the states that have evaluation procedures in place, six reported conducting evaluation on an annual basis, five on a continuous basis and one on an as-needed basis. In the majority of cases, data sources for evaluation include general and special educators and school psychologists. Fewer than 10 respondents reported including data from administrative personnel, school counselors, paraprofessionals, community organizations, mental health agencies, parents and students, juvenile justice or law enforcement agencies. Between seven and nine states reported using each of the following methods of data collection for evaluation: surveys; archival reviews; interviews; and direct observation of students.

## Policy Recommendations

The following recommendations for state policy have been identified by Project FORUM and are based on an analysis of the preceding literature review and survey results.

Developing and Implementing SBIs

- Ensure that representatives from all relevant stakeholder groups participate in the development and implementation of SBIs including: the SEA; local education agencies (LEAs); schools, institutions of higher education (IHEs); health care providers; social service agencies; mental health agencies;

private foundations; neighborhood organizations; juvenile justice and law enforcement; and students and families.

- Offer technical assistance to schools and agencies on how to approach interagency cooperation in a more flexible and creative manner (e.g., developing protocols for convening interdisciplinary meetings, stream-lining procedures for information sharing, meeting with students and families in non-agency settings, etc.).
- Assist schools to develop and implement integrated referral and case management systems with other agencies as a component of their SBIs.
- Encourage schools and agencies to adopt consistent eligibility criteria for services and comparable diagnostic and disability terminology.
- Implement policies and strategies that reduce or eliminate categorical intervention models (i.e., models that provide services based on specific eligibility categories).
- Provide leadership guidance and resources to encourage the development of school-based services to address behavioral issues.
- Base SBIs on the tenets of PBS (e.g., the teaching and reinforcing of pro-social behavior).
- Develop a system for collecting student outcome data that documents academic and behavioral progress to ensure that decision-making related to SBIs is data driven.



Financial Support and Incentives

- Provide financial support for SBIs by tapping a variety of funding sources, including federal special education funds, state special education funds, Safe and Drug Free Schools monies, state general funds, district and local funds, private funds/grants and capacity building or sliver funds.
- Design funding mechanisms in such a way that agencies are not competing for dollars.
- Provide incentives for restructuring existing service systems that promote collaboration and cooperation between schools and agencies.

Personnel Issues

- Provide professional development to school and agency personnel on interdisciplinary teaming.
- Provide guidance to teachers and agency personnel on the use of positive behavioral supports (PBS), functional behavioral assessments (FBA) and other pro-active behavior intervention tools.
- Collaborate with appropriate licensing boards and IHEs to facilitate the training of personnel to work across disciplines (e.g., managing multi-component interventions involving numerous agencies, coordinating multiple funding sources and being accountable to various professional agencies).
- Develop university-level training programs that provide interdisciplinary practicum experience and build collaborative teaming skills.

In sum, as states adopt new SBIs or revise existing SBIs, it is recommended that initiatives support programs with the above characteristics. It is important to note, however, that the structure and focus of SBIs is expected to vary based on the unique needs and resources of individual states.

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This report was supported by the U.S. Department of Education (Cooperative Agreement No. H326F000001). However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the Department should be inferred.

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